



American Expression E1310 Run in the family

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The phrase "run in the family" is an idiomatic expression used to describe the occurrence of certain traits, characteristics, conditions, or behaviors that are shared among family members, typically across generations. When something "runs in the family," it suggests a pattern or commonality in which specific traits or conditions are inherited or passed down genetically from one generation to the next.

The concept behind "run in the family" is rooted in the field of genetics, where hereditary factors play a significant role in determining an individual's physical and sometimes even behavioral attributes. These hereditary factors are passed down through the genetic material, DNA, from parents to their offspring.

In its most straightforward application, the phrase is used to discuss physical traits that are often observable. For example, if a family has a history of members being tall or having a certain eye color, you might say, "Being tall or having blue eyes seems to run in their family." This suggests that these particular physical traits are consistently passed down from one generation to another.

Beyond physical characteristics, "run in the family" is also used to describe the inheritance of medical conditions or health tendencies. For instance, if multiple generations of a family have a history of diabetes, heart disease, or allergies, you might say that these health conditions "run in the family." This highlights the genetic predisposition that can increase the likelihood of certain health issues within the family lineage.

Behavioral patterns and personality traits can also be associated with the phrase. If a family has a reputation for being highly ambitious, artistic, or prone to a specific type of behavior, such as a strong sense of humor or a tendency to be introverted, you might say that these traits "run in the family." This suggests that these characteristics are not solely the result of upbringing or environment but also have a genetic component.

It's important to note that when something "runs in the family," it doesn't mean that every member of the family will possess the trait or condition in question. Genetic inheritance is a complex interplay of various factors, and the expression of certain traits can vary widely even within the same family. Additionally, environmental factors, lifestyle choices, and chance can also influence the manifestation of these traits or conditions.

The concept of traits running in the family has important implications in the fields of genetics and healthcare. Understanding family medical histories and identifying patterns of inherited conditions can help healthcare professionals assess an individual's risk factors and make informed recommendations for preventive measures and screenings.

In summary, "run in the family" is an idiomatic expression used to describe the occurrence of certain traits, characteristics, conditions, or behaviors that are shared among family members across generations. This phrase underscores the role of genetics in shaping an individual's physical, medical, and sometimes behavioral attributes. While it signifies a genetic predisposition, it does not guarantee that every family member will exhibit the trait or condition in question, as genetic expression is influenced by various factors.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you share examples of traits, conditions, or behaviors that you've observed to "run in the family" among your relatives or in your own family? How do these inherited characteristics impact family dynamics?
2. How has the awareness of certain traits or medical conditions that "run in the family" influenced your personal health choices and lifestyle decisions, if at all?
3. In what ways does the concept of traits running in the family intersect with the broader discussion of nature versus nurture? How do genetics and environment interact to shape individuals within a family?
4. Can you provide examples from your own experience or knowledge of famous individuals or public figures whose talents, achievements, or conditions seem to "run in the family," and what insights can be gained from these cases?
5. When it comes to inherited traits, conditions, or behaviors, what ethical considerations should families and individuals be aware of, especially regarding genetic testing, counseling, and potential implications for future generations?